Castlemaine Naturalist

May 2018

Vol. 43.4 #464

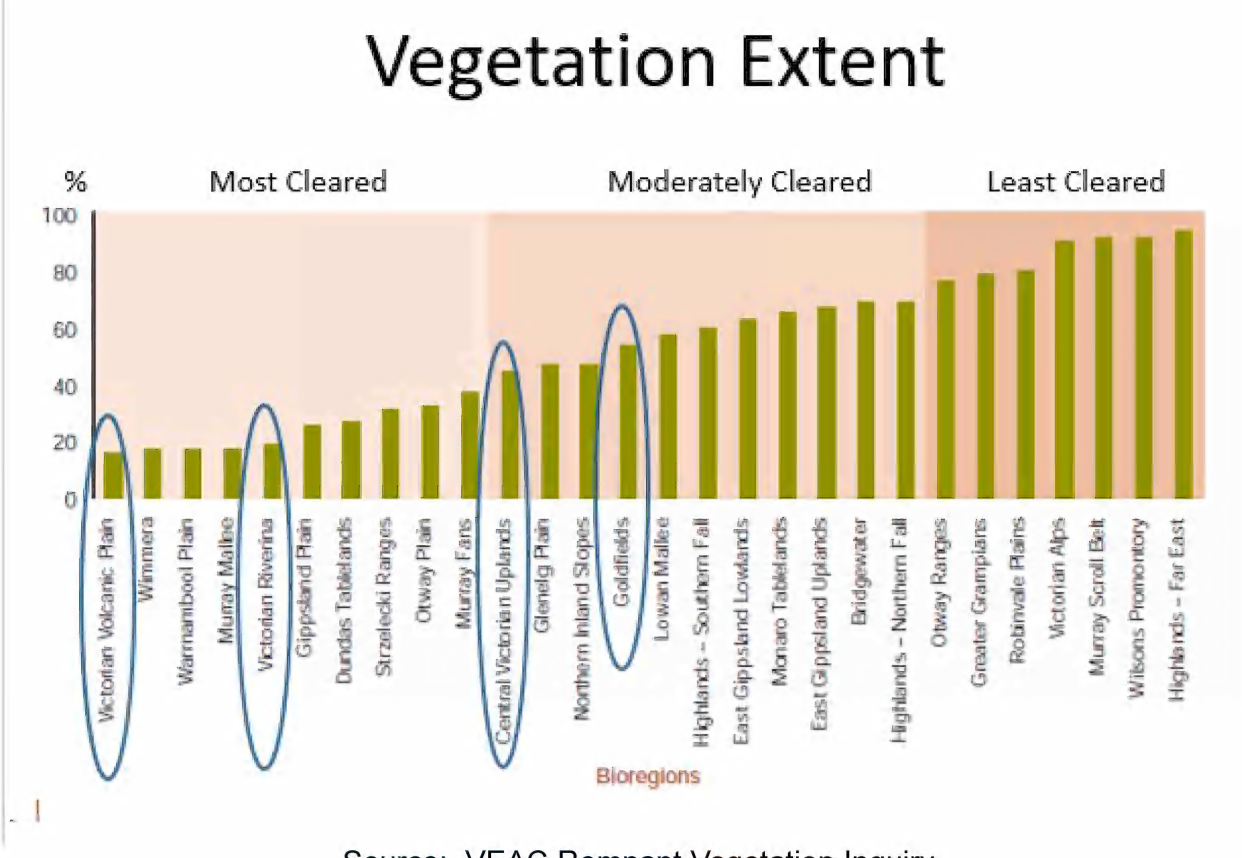
Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Striated (Mangrove) Heron – photo by Noel Young
(see page 6 for a review of David Hollands' talk)

Priorities and Challenges for Nature Conservation in Victoria

Euan Moore

Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia. In some bioregions only a small percentage of native vegetation remains, much of it in a degraded state. Three of the four bioregions that overlap the Castlemaine region, circled, are more than 50% cleared (see figure)



Source: VEAC Remnant Vegetation Inquiry

Since its beginnings in 1952 the VNPA has been fighting for the protection and sound management of the natural environment in Victoria through the establishment of National Parks and other reserves and for sufficient resources to manage these reserves so that our flora and fauna will survive over the long term. There have been many campaigns over the past 66 years which have resulted in the increase in the national park estate to what we see today however there are still gaps in the network of protected areas.

The VNPA works on three fronts: nature conservation through advocacy, policy and science; education and empowerment through programs such as Reefwatch and Communities Listening for Nature; and activities and adventures such as bushwalking that get people out into the bush to enjoy the natural environment.

Some of our current campaigns include Hoodies vs Horses to stop race horse training on public beaches near Port Fairy which are a major breeding area for Hooded Plover (endangered), obtaining protection for the Moolap – Point Henry area and preventing inappropriate development in national parks. More information about this and other issues can be found here https://vnpa.org.au/category/news/

The VNPA is also contributing to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) study into the forests of central western Victoria including Cobaw, Wombat, Pyrenees and Wellsford Forests. These are all forests within the area of interest for Castlemaine Field Nats. More information can be found at

http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/investigation/central-west-investigation

The VEAC draft recommendations for these areas will be released later this year. CFNC members should watch for the release and take the time to comment. This is a major opportunity to improve the protection of these areas and your knowledge can help identify key areas for protection.

Fire management is another area where VNPA has been very active. VNPA believes that scientific enquiry rather than arbitrary targets should be used to determine the best ways to manage fire in the environment so that both human and natural assets are protected https://vnpa.org.au/fire/

In western Victoria many of our forests are under renewed threat from logging. In most cases these forests mainly produce low value products such as posts and firewood. In some areas there is also logging by stealth when large numbers of trees are removed from roadsides in the name of safety. https://vnpa.org.au/western-forests-and-woodlands/

The VNPA has a strong citizen science program. Key projects include Reefwatch https://vnpa.org.au/programs/reefwatch/ and NatureWatch https://vnpa.org.au/programs/naturewatch/ . A new project in conjunction with Museum of Victoria is Communities Listening for Nature

http://vnpa.org.au/programs/communities-listening-for-nature/ where song meters are deployed to capture the sounds of birds over an extended period of time. VNPA has recently teamed up with local group Connecting Country to have volunteers deploy song meters in the Castlemaine area.

VNPA has an extensive bushwalking and activities program https://vnpa.org.au/explore/ The program is much wider than just bushwalking and includes excursions, walk talk and gawk, family fun days and more. All activities provide a way for people to appreciate and enjoy the natural environment.

The VNPA is a not-for-profit membership based organisation relying on donations from members and the public to carry out its work. Visit the VNPA webpage https://vnpa.org.au/ to see more of what the organisation does and please support us in whatever way you can.

Great Forests NP campaign, Mt Donna Buang, April 2016

[The above article is a precis by Euan Moore of the talk he gave to the club in February. Euan is president of the Victorian National Parks Association.]

Notes and Specimens from Wildlife magazine

George Broadway

Nature Notes May 2018 (May 1948)

Here are more specimens which were sent in to Crosbie Morrison, editor of "Wildlife Magazine". "Wildlife" was a nature magazine which ran from 1938 to the middle fifties. As well as being full of interesting articles there were also answers for readers who sent in specimens for identification. I have been intrigued by the number of times certain items were sent in. Had those readers not read thoroughly previous editions of the magazine?

Here then is a list of the specimens sent in in which appeared in the May 1948 edition. Please report if you see any of these.

Insects

Wodonga: Rutherglen Bugs. Enemies of the orchardist. Otherwise known as Silver Bugs

Outrim: Vine Hawk Moth caterpillars. See Aug '17 . Feeds on grape and ornamental vines.

E Geelong: Also

Flemington: Chrysalis of Admiral Butterfly. Burnished gold. Caterpillars feed on nettle leaves.

Gonn Crossing: Moth Lacewing Fly, *Psychopsis mimica.* Looks like a lovely silky moth but is a lacewing fly of the order Neuroptera. A relative of the "Ant-lion"

Surrey Hills: Very small Mantis, bark-haunting, feeds on tiny insects on and under bark of trees.

Somerset (T) Gum Emperor Moth with unusually dark colouring.

Also Camberwell

Curyo: One of the Grass Moths, *Anthela,* See May & June '17. The Hairy caterpillars sometimes occur in such numbers as to damage pastures and cause illness in stock.

Stanley (T): Apparently wingless moth. Only because wings had not expanded properly after leaving chrysalis.

Bendigo: Footman Moth. All are light coloured with fawn markings on wings and orange and black on body. Larvae are "Woolly Bears" destructive in the garden but a host for the little *Braconid* wasps.

South Alberton: A bladder fly *Oncodes basalis.* Larvae are parasitic on spiders.

Oakleigh: Rove Beetle. Not readily recognizable as a beetle because the wing covers leave much of the abdomen uncovered. They look fierce when they curl their tails over their backs but are harmless.

Bayswater: Green Long-horned Grasshopper. Not one of the crop damaging type, but these remain bright green and live among the green foliage of shrubs on which they feed.

Tallangatta: Caterpillar and chrysalis of the Common Australian Crow Butterfly, *Euploea corinna.* This constitutes the first record of the species in Victoria. The genus *Euploea* is a tropical group and is named "common" because it is frequently met between Sydney and Cape York, although around Sydney it is not seen every year.

And Albury

Nunawading: Tree Cricket (June '16)

Mornington: Wattle Goat Moth. (Mar '17)

Barkers Creek: Convolvulus Hawk Moth. (Nov 16)
Warracknabeal Vine Hawk Moth, chrysalis. (Nov 16)
Narre Warren: Ghost Moth larva, a long black caterpillar (July '16)

Birds

Burramine: Goshawk, pure white variety. Normal habitat is the Otway Ranges, not the North of the state. (I saw one once flying along Forest Creek. I thought at first it was a white cockatoo)

Spiders

Terang: Huntsman Spider (see Sep '16). It does spin silk, usually to fasten bits of bark and leaves together to shelter an eggsac. She does not use it as a snare, all hunting is done on foot. If your spider was in or near a web it must have been that of another spider.
Rocklands (W.A.): Orchard spider (Dec '16)
Euroa: Spiny Spider (Oct '16)
And Ivanhoe
Also Chirrup
Gisborne: Enamel-back Spider, a species related to the bird-catching Nephila of the tropics. It is harmless; the male is 1/60 the size of the female.

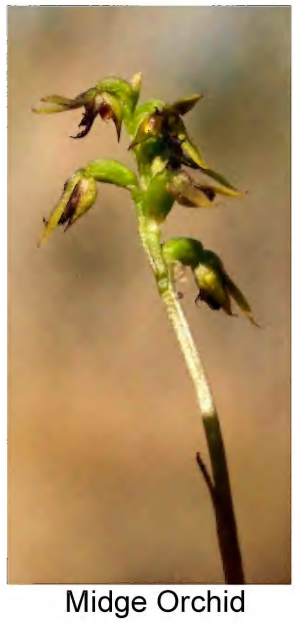
Common Crow butterfly

Long-headed grasshopper

A visit to Smiths Reef Dam

Peter Turner

In the May 2017 *Castlemaine Naturalist* Rita Mills reported on the excursion on April 8th to Smiths Reef Dam, where Parsons Bands *Eriochilus cucullatus* was just by the cars, and Red-tipped Greenhoods and Midge Orchids were also recorded. Rita wrote "One of the things I found most encouraging were the numerous seedlings of shrubs and trees we kept finding. It will be wonderful if we have a wet enough winter for them to become well enough established to survive next summer". Later that week Rosemary and I (who had been unable to join the excursion) were guided to the area by Richard Piesse, and saw these orchids, but also the Large Autumn Greenhood *Pterostylis revoluta*, which Rosemary found on the hillside over the track from the dam.


Midge Orchid

On 19th April Richard Rosemary and I returned to the dam to look for autumn orchids. Parsons Bands were seen but we looked in vain for the Greenhoods. We were about to leave

when Richard spotted a single Midge Orchid, close to the car – an area we had already searched carefully! After checking with Ern Perkins' 2014 plant list, he believes it is the Dark Midge Orchid *Corunastylis* sp aff *rufa* (Goldfields).

Rita's wish for a wet enough winter was granted – there are many small plants that have survived the summer but the impact of the continued dry conditions for much of this year are all too evident. The ground is crunchy underfoot, the trees look tired and the many shrubs look desperate for a decent drink.

Cranes, Herons and Storks of Australia

Peter Turner

David Hollands spoke about his studies and photography over many years of the 17 species of Australian cranes, herons and storks at the April General Meeting. This was his third presentation to the club, and the book about these splendid birds, published in 2016, is his sixth.

Observing the life of these birds, and in particular their breeding practices, is clearly not for the faint-hearted, as David's presentation made clear. Brolgas make nests in reed beds, and are very wary: to get close enough even with today's excellent telephoto lenses and digital recording, required patience and carefully placed hides. The very similar Sarus Crane breeds in wetlands near the south-east corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Only after five repeated visits with his colleague John Young was David able to find and observe a nest. Then there was the Great-billed Heron, that breeds along crocodile infested waterways. Local advice was that the crocs were small – but not the massive one that kept David up a ladder, placed to observe a nest, for hours until it slid away.

A network of fellow bird enthusiasts across the country provided David Hollands with information about potential sightings of breeding bitterns, the Black-necked Stork (no longer the Jabiru – the Brazilian name for the South American *Jabiru mycteria),* and many herons. As with his earlier studies of eagles and owls, David uses a very tall tower with a hide at the top to observe the nests of birds such as the Black-necked Stork.

We were treated to a sequence of superb photographs of the two species of crane, the magnificent black and white stork, with its brilliant long red legs, and many of the herons. These images were a selection from those in the book, which has detailed accounts of the behaviour of each species, and further entertaining tales of the challenges David and his fellow bird experts faced. A most informative evening, greatly appreciated by the large audience.

Reference: *Cranes, Herons & Storks of Australia,* text and photographs by David Hollands, Blooming Books, Melbourne, 2016.

Bird Quiz

Nigel Harland

The bird featured last month was the Striated Thornbill. There are eleven different Thornbills found in Australia. Many years ago when I found my last Thornbill, I decided to tape up that part of the Field Guide because they present a very difficult family to identify! Many can be found in our region, including the Striated. It is very similar to the very common Brown Thornbill and can be identified by the noticeable streaking on the top of the head.

The bird for next month is shown at right.

Observations reported at the April meeting

Chis Timewell: in CBG - **Blue faced Honeyeater** today, and 2 weeks ago, about 20 **Grey-headed Flying Foxes** roosted in a Pencil Pine for 2 or 3 days.

Dianne: Blue-faced Honeyeaters in CBG.

Geoff Harris: **Grey Butcherbird** (very unusual in our area)

Peter Turner: **Powerful Owl** sightings in the CBG – probably last season's adult. Will it find a mate and breed again? Plus a Willy Wagtail seen at home – rare in North Castlemaine.

A number of other interesting observations included **Swift Parrots** on 16/17 March in Gingell St and Farnsworth St. eucalypts, a fox drinking in Barkers Ck. near the underpass, a **Rose Robin** sighting, a flock of **Rainbow Lorikeets** near the old gaol and in Gingell st., Pied Currawongs and YT Black Cockatoos about, and a diseased? Musk Lorikeet found dead, - frozen to be passed on to research vets; **White – breasted Woodswallows** ~ 6 seen at Cairn Curren today; a Powerful Owl was flushed from a paddock at night by a tractor at Baringhup, and an example of out of season syndrome - Tall Bluebells in flower along the channel near Taradale.

Observations by Richard Piesse

on the FOBIF walk on 15/4/18 in the south end of the Fryers Range.

In flower;

Cassinia aculeata - Common Cassinia; *Eucalyptus dives* and *goniocalyx*; *Acacia genistifolia* and *lanigera.*

Identified 11 of Bernard's wattles and 10 eucalypts.

The bush was obviously very dry prior to recent rain. However, a large percentage of the bushes look very healthy. Many of the trees are not so healthy, whether through drought conditions or caterpillars.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists
Coming events

Fri May 11 meeting: speaker ZOE THOMPSON – native grasslands in urban areas

Sat May 12 field trip: to a grassland area

Mon May 14: Roadside clean-up. Organiser Geoff Harris
9 a.m. start at cnr. Golf Links road on Pyrenees Highway

Takes 1 – 2 hrs., Wear sturdy footwear and gloves. Garbage bags and reflective vests will be supplied. Please note KABC rules prohibit anyone under 16 from working on the roadside.

Fri June 8 meeting: speaker JOHN WALTER on Fungi

Sat June 9 field trip: Blackwood

Fri July 13 meeting: speaker TANYA LOOS of Connecting Country

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website (Web master: Chris Timewell) - http://castlemainefnc.wordpress.com/

Subscriptions for 2018
Ordinary membership: Single $35, Family $50
Pensioner or student: Single $25, Family $30
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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